

BOOK REVIEWS

Non-Gonococcal Urethritis. By A. H. Harkness, M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P. 1950. E. and S. Livingstone, Edinburgh. Pp. 424, 167 illustrations (73 in full colour). 52s. 6d.

The author and the publishers are to be congratulated upon producing a book which is well printed, lavishly and finely illustrated, and whose subject matter is a monument to an infinite capacity for work. This is no book for the beginner nor for the day-dreamer whose attention cannot be focused upon every word. It is in large part a work of reference and of authority, and already "Harkness says" is an everyday utterance in those departments where the urethroscope and the microscope are inseparable companions. It is well that a urologist of the lower reaches of the tract found himself in the company of an accomplished bacteriologist and of research workers of imagination and industry, and that his medical and surgical colleagues have not scorned the opinion of a pox doctor.

Possibly the best way of reading this book is to master the information contained in the three memoranda of Appendix A, especially the first by Harkness and the third by Coutts. One is then well furnished with the hard core of indisputable facts to which one must hold fast in all the reading that is to follow, because the views of many other workers are given prominence and they are by no means corroborative. A little light reading can now be indulged in by turning to the preface, with its salutary warning in the last paragraph on the subject of critics, and then reading up the history, much of which is breaking new ground and has occasioned the author many an hour of plodding through the writings of two centuries in three languages. From this point to the beginning of Chapter X, the matter is easily digested since it relates the practical experience of the author in which those who have had more than a passing interest in the bacteriology of urethritis can share. Chapters X to XIII, however, are decidedly difficult reading because of the number of authors quoted and the divergent views expressed. Statistics, together with the unfamiliar bacteriology of the pleuro-pneumonia group of organisms and the uncertainty of the study of viruses, calls for a clear brain and concentration on every word. This of course, is the section which the author has made peculiarly his own and his views on the subjects of abacterial urethritis, and the metastatic complications which one has been accustomed to call "gonorrhoeal", may well prove to be correct.

Much of the remainder of the book is devoted to the activities of tropical live-stock as they affect the urethra. It must be some consolation to our shoals of channel swimmers of both sexes that tope do not possess the undesirable proclivities of candiru (*Vandellia cirrhosa*) as described in Chapter XVIII. More common con-

ditions are discussed and described in the chapters dealing with the bulbo-urethral glands, where anatomy, physiology, and pathology are so well presented, and with systemic and descending infections, particular stress being laid on the importance of tuberculosis of the genito-urinary tract. Practical and forthright writing on the value of the complement fixation test in gonorrhoea, criteria of cure, and special methods of treatment make excellent reading, and the author's interest in subjects such as "Wajir clap" shows how profoundly he has studied every aspect of his subject.

This is a book which should be in the hands of everyone interested in the theory and practice of urology; it cannot but widen his horizon, and make each perplexing condition a challenge to his diagnostic acumen and therapeutic ingenuity.

A. O. F. R.

Report on a Venereal Diseases Survey of the African in Southern Rhodesia. By R. R. Willcox. 1949. Department of Health, S. Rhodesia. Pp. 52, with a map and 37 tables.

This survey was made during six months in 1949, by Dr. Willcox, a technician, and the latter's wife, mainly to ascertain whether more rapid and more efficient methods of treatment could be instituted. The distances covered and the investigations carried out are a tribute to the zeal of the team. The 37 tables summarize the trends, if not the completely accurate facts of the problems studied.

As in Gt. Britain, syphilis, gonorrhoea, and non-specific urethritis predominate, while lymphogranuloma venereum and granuloma inguinale have only a comparatively minor prevalence. Yaws is not the problem in this part of Africa that it is in other areas of the continent, but "njovera", an endemic condition similar to the Asiatics' "bejel", is relatively common. At the time of survey, diagnosis was mainly clinical, dark-ground and other laboratory facilities being greatly needed as the first step to more efficient therapy. Arsenic, bismuth, and the sulphonamides were the main drugs in use, and long hospitalization a constant strain on bed state. Following accurate diagnosis, Dr. Willcox rightly stresses the considerable saving, high rate of cure, and reduction of default which would be made possible by the proper use of penicillin.

The average reader will be considerably surprised by the amount of prostitution found in Southern Rhodesia; the vice associated with the so-called "tea parties", almost unbelievable in the present day, seems to have been very largely contributed to by the loss of tribal habits and traditions.

The report is interesting and remarkably thorough, but could have been improved by a briefer summary of recommendations.

D. J. C.